

What was amounting to a nationally recognized drouth has been altered by one rainy spell. The Shortgrass Country, at the time of this writing, has received measurements ranging up to the 5 inch bracket. Pastures that were too sparse to harbor a lizard are flooded. Plenty of reweaving will need to be done to the grasslands to undo the devastation of the past winter but hopes reign high in all quarters.

Before the moisture arrived, opposition was mounting against the drouth. Herders everywhere were beginning to find faults with the weather. Rainmaker jokes were being met by sullen audiences. Anti-drouth sentiment was developing to a degree that even state politicians were able to sense the people's feelings.

The fact that the worthies in the state capital noticed their subjects' displeasure is proof of how strong opinions were developing. As a rule of finger, you can bet 9 to 1 that in an off-election year the citizens could be having running fits in very one of the 254 county seats in the state without the politicians ever hearing of the disturbance. You could give even greater odds if the wager was limited to rural areas; and if you could limit the bet to strictly ranching communities, you'd be guilty of stealing if you gave less than a 100 to 1. Put your faith in government wherever you wish, but don't be foolish enough to think that an elective body is going to notice a tantrum thrown on a non-election year by a minority as small as the ranchers of the state. If you are just dead set on getting those boy's attention either go down to the bank and borrow a sackfull of hundred dollar bills or go find a school that'll teach you how to give an entire legislative chamber a simultaneous hot foot. Considering how things generally work around state houses, I'd strongly suggest that you didn't give up too easy at the bank, because hot foot experts are hard to find in this day and age.

This lackluster attitude toward the drouth wasn't a new reaction. In the '50s, folks withdrew their support of the dry weather after the first 10 or 12 months. That drouth lasted five years longer. To my knowledge the people never did regain any enthusiasm for dry weather. Dust and bare ground fell out of favor and stayed that way. Hay selling robbers became unpopular and were hated until the end. Once these Shortgrassers make up their minds that they don't like something, they don't change. I can't remember a one of the survivors that ever had one kind thing to say about those dry days.

The responsibility of changing the ranchman's prejudice against dry weather rests in the media. Until the press ceases to use such words as "lurks" and "looms" in connection with every rain failure, the victims are going to overreact to drouthism. Softer terms are going to have to be created. Headlines such as "'A Wisp of Ten Month Old Dry Weather is Hitting Texas'" would be much superior to the ominous old standbys that frighten us all. Advertising men have been able to sell artificial biscuits, so I know that drouths could be better merchandised.

Oh, how I dearly hope that this rain has broken the cycle. Too many old boys are too mad to make another stand against a dry calamity. Ranchers aren't ever going to have balanced personalities until they can look at drouth without losing their tempers.